

N E W S R E L E A S E

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\$6 Million Grant Will Help Repair Wildfire Damage, Create Jobs and Provide Aid for Fire Victims

SACRAMENTO – A new \$6 million federal grant will create more than 350 jobs for unemployed workers repairing damage caused by the wildfires that ravaged parts of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and Santa Barbara counties last November.

"This national emergency grant is an important part of our efforts to help California recover from the wildfires and the economic downturn," said Doug Hoffner, Acting Secretary of the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. "The Governor has already contributed \$13 million in discretionary job training funds to help stimulate the economy. We will use this money to complement that effort, targeting these funds to a wide variety of tasks needed to repair the wildfire damage, and to create temporary jobs for more than 350 unemployed workers – not only those displaced by the fires, but also those suffering from the impact of the national recession on California."

Much of the work to be done involves watershed restoration, preventing erosion that could lead to landslides during the rainy season, replanting vegetation, removing hazardous trees, replacing guardrails and visitor signs and other work on public land damaged by the fires.

"Last year's wildfires had a devastating impact on several southern California communities," said Matthew Bettenhausen, Acting Director of the California Emergency Management Agency. "This is an important step in the recovery process – putting people back to work rebuilding their lives and communities."

Jobs funded by the grant will last as long as six months and pay up to \$2,000 per month. The jobs will go to applicants who are unemployed because of the wildfires, to the long-term unemployed and other unemployed workers who meet certain requirements. Work is expected to start in about one month.

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The U.S. Department of Labor is making \$2 million available immediately to the state Employment Development Department (EDD) to be distributed to local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) in the four counties. The remaining \$4 million will be distributed as needed. Local EDD offices will help the county WIBs recruit workers for the positions.

National Emergency Grants are funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act. The U.S. Secretary of Labor awards the grants based on a state's ability to meet specific guidelines.

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